

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 24, 2012

The Hon. Doc Hastings, Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Hon. Edward J. Markey, Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
1329 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Hon. Rob Bishop, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks,
Forests and Public Lands
1324 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Hon. Raul M. Grijalva, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks,
Forests and Public Lands
1329 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member Markey:

We write to recommend a course of action in response to a recent court decision that immediately barred the National Park Service (NPS) from issuing permits for the use of pack and saddle stock in the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks for this summer's visitors.

This order is already causing economic harm to outfitters, packers, guides, and other permit holders, and it has the potential to significantly affect Americans' enjoyment of the parks' wilderness areas this year. Time is of the essence; spring and summer trips are currently being planned — or canceled — and once visitors' decisions are made, the local and regional economic impacts will be irreversible.

Visiting the high country wilderness in the Sierras is one of the premier experiences the National Park system has to offer. That is one of the reasons we strongly supported P.L. 111-11, establishing the John Krebs Wilderness in the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and why we are so concerned by the economic and recreational impact of this ruling.

We understand that members of your committee have recently written the Department of the Interior, urging the Secretary to ask the court for an extension of existing permits. Notably, although that letter cited P.L. 111-11, none of the signatories supported the bill in the House.

More importantly, that letter offers no solutions to the immediate problem. The remedy hearing for this case is not scheduled until next month, and there is no guarantee that the court will rule in time for visitors to enjoy the Sequoia and Kings Canyon wilderness this year, or even next year. Asking Secretary Salazar to, in turn, ask the court for a permit extension has no bearing on whether the public will be able to enjoy the wilderness

experience this year, nor does it give the permit holders the ability to conduct their business this year.

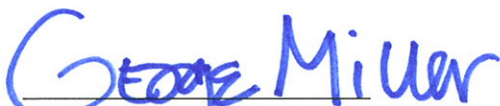
The NPS will be filing its proposed remedy this week, and it is certain that the Department is already considering — and will request from the court — a remedy that provides wilderness access. But in the meantime this situation cannot be fixed without congressional action, and it is a disservice to businesses and visitors to suggest that the NPS can change the facts on the ground until the court rules.

Fortunately, this matter can be easily resolved without placing any additional burden on the visitors or business owners who depend on the parks. The solution is simple: the Natural Resources committee, under your leadership, should introduce and take up clean legislation providing the NPS with authority to issue permits for the use of commercial services in designated wilderness within the Sequoia and Kings Canyon parks, provided that the level of commercial services does not exceed the levels authorized in 2011. Such an authorization should be time-bound, lasting through the end of next year, or until the Secretary issues an “extent necessary” determination that addresses the violations found in the court decision.

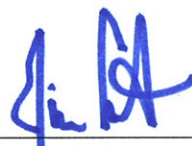
We believe that such a bill, narrowly drafted to solve this problem, would provide the NPS sufficient time to correct its legal deficiencies while avoiding prejudicing the judicial process. We further believe that such a bill could be approved by your Committee and the House on a bipartisan basis, and could quickly resolve this year’s impasse to the benefit of businesses and visitors alike.

We look forward to your speedy reply.

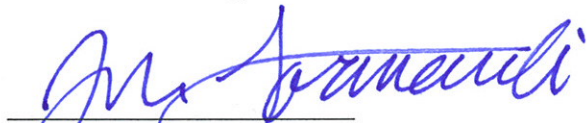
Sincerely,



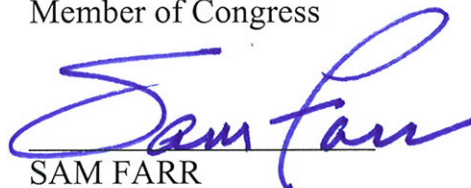
GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress



JIM COSTA
Member of Congress



JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress



SAM FARR
Member of Congress



MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress